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CT SI-390692*

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Mr. Chairman and members of the General Law Committee:

I'm in favor of SB268. My name is Jeff Leone; I live in Berlin CT and have a business located in Southington, CT, Air Temp Mechanical Services, Inc. We have 27 full time employees that are residents of CT. These jobs are high paying jobs that range from \$40,000 per year to \$125,000 per year. We offer our employees and their families' health insurance which we pay 70% of the entire premium; we pay for the employees dental, life insurance, short term disability and long term disability 100%, and our employees get 7 paid holidays and up to five weeks of vacation. We invest a minimum of \$30,000 per year in training for our employees, we have a Safety program that keeps our employees safe at work and helps prevent on the job injuries. We currently have a .77 MOD rate which is the lowest allowable safety rate that the state allows (we work very hard at this). This mod rate gives Air Temp a 23% discount on our workman's comp insurance. What I'm trying to say is, WE DO NOT HIRE CHEAP LABOR and we invest in our employees by giving them a great wage and a safe work environment and free continuing education.

We have struggled over the years with the apprenticeship ratio as it has hindered our growth. When we have tried hiring additional apprentices and applied for ratio relief we have been denied. I have included the applications and letters from the Department of Labor denying relief. Why would the Department of Labor not want me to hire apprentices and put people to work? Currently we would hire at least two more full time apprentices but we are unable to do so because of the current ratio.

We complete our D-2 Apprentices at a rate of \$20.00 per hour; this rate is set by the Department of Labor. A D-2 apprenticeship is a two year program, so in two years a graduate from a CT State Technical High School can be making over \$40,000.00 per year, AGAIN NOT CHEAP LABOR.

You will hear testimony against SB268 stating that by changing the ratio we will be able to hire cheap labor. Well we know that's not true because the Department of Labor sets our starting and completion pay rates for apprenticeships. Also they will say it's a safety issue. Well we know that's not true because the current on the job site ratio is 1 to 1 (one apprentice for each journeyman), also all apprentices must have attended a OSHA 10 safety course before becoming an apprentice.

Gov. Malloy and the General Assembly approved the "Comprehensive Energy Strategy" last year in legislation, which includes adding 300,000 new gas customers over the next 10 years. There is just one problem - our industry is losing journeymen to retirement at a rate of 3 to1, so for every three journeyman retiring we are only replacing this job with one journeyman. If the current ratio is not changed contractors will have a huge labor shortage and will not be able man the addition of 300,000 new gas customers. Please say yes to SB268 as this will create high paying jobs in the state of Connecticut.

Thank You,

Jeff Leone

President

Air Temp Mechanical Services, Inc.